COACH AND BUS WEEK

CBW

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Coach and bus group faces probe into financial standing

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CBW says

Mark Williams, Editor, *CBW*, Emap Active, Bretton Court, Bretton, Peterborough PE3 8DZ
or e-mail *mark.williams@emap.com*

Harried at every turn

MANY thanks to London traffic warden WS4594 who, at 1904hrs last Tuesday, underlined what's wrong with coaching in the capital.

I was among two coachloads of Confederation of Passenger Transport members on our way to dinner at the Millennium Hotel, Grosvenor Square. As we alighted from one of two Tellings' coaches outside the hotel, warden WS4594 was furtively scribbling.

I'd heard the stories, and hadn't really believed them until now - for, although each coach simply pulled up and the passengers quickly disembarked, with absolutely no traffic obstruction being created, the two minutes it took was time enough for traffic warden WS4594 to issue a ticket and begin writing a second.

The kerbside of the hotel was completely packed with private cars and a couple of taxis, none of which received his attention. He had clearly set out to nail coaches which fell victim of this by double 'parking'.

How does this tally with Transport for London's Grand Plan to reduce car traffic? Precisely how are 100 people to get across London by coach if coaches are harried at every turn? Would London rather see an extra 80 cars on the road?

What I witnessed last Tuesday was absolutely disgraceful. Traffic warden WS4594 was probably correct that, technically, an offence had been committed - but, if traffic wardens are there to keep traffic flowing, his actions are likely to achieve the precise opposite by generating more taxi and car traffic.

'Traffic wardens should instead receive training that explains the purpose of their role'

I am not saying London's enforcement teams should lay off coaches altogether. I've seen some truly stupid behaviour by coach drivers that deserves a ticket - but I understand from one senior figure in the industry that the police are considering prosecuting coach drivers if the rear overhang of a stationary coach is over a yellow-hatched 'no stopping' box. The only thing that idea lacks is common sense.

According to Westminster's press office, the hated bonus scheme that many traffic wardens operate under is being phased out by NCP - who now provide enforcement for the borough - but instead there's an insistence that each warden issues one ticket per hour. It amounts to the same thing, of course - an incentive for wardens to forget about discretion and make every offence into a ticket.

Traffic wardens should instead receive training that explains the purpose of their role in achieving a free flow of traffic. In that function, coaches are not the problem, but an essential part of the solution.

● My grateful thanks to readers who have complimented us on producing cbwnet - this magazine's sister website.

In particular, thanks for the helpful suggestion for fresh content, which we are taking into account in the next development phase. Please keep the suggestions coming.

If you are considering buying or selling a vehicle, cbwnet is the place to go. No more trawling endless classified ads - just input your choice of body, chassis or price and let the website find a match. There are almost 300 vehicles listed already and, with our advertising department offering on-line ads at just £15, the choice is about to grow again.

Mark Williams, Editor

Coach and Bus Week is a member of the following organisations:

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2 Travel heads for an inquiry over finances

ANDY RODEN REPORTER

WELSH operator 2 Travel Group faces a public inquiry in August over bus monitoring issues and financial standing.

The news comes a week after the recently-floated company's chief executive Bev Fowles accused competitors of using predatory tactics in Cardiff (*CBW*, July 22).

In a communication seen by *CBW*, a senior VOSA source wrote: "The traffic commissioner is aware of problems with various registrations run by the 2 Travel Group plc...a monitoring exercise was carried out and, based on these results, that traffic commissioner is calling the company to a public inquiry for bus monitoring and financial standing." The public inquiry takes place on August 16 and 17. It is understood it will also involve maintenance issues.

Following Mr Fowles' allegation of competitors running a 'bus war' in Cardiff, one of his rivals has issued a denial. Speaking exclusively to *CBW*, Cardiff Bus managing director David Brown confirmed his company is running 13 white vehicles to see if there is a market for cheap bus travel. He says it is "co-incidence" that these run on the same corridors as 2 Travel services.

"We don't want bus wars - effectively we're experimenting with white minibuses to see if the market is there," he said. Mr Brown claims customers are opting for higher quality services instead.

CBW also understands representations have been made to the traffic commissioner about the operation of some of 2 Travel's services, which have been claimed to be poor or not operating at all. Mr Fowles admitted the company has driver problems and says it is training Gurkhas to fill the gap. It is unclear whether these objections form part of the public inquiry.

Though no announcements have been made about senior appointments at 2 Travel - chaired by former Tory Minister of Trade, Sir Richard Needham - it is known that at least one board member is seeking alternative employment.

Mr Fowles and senior managers at 2 Travel were unavailable for comment as *CBW* went to press.

Maintenance and timings also an issue

2 Travel: faces stiff competition in Cardiff

Arriva and BP save £5 million

AN agreement between Arriva and BP is expected to save £5 million over five years.

The arrangement, in which BP buys and manages Arriva's fuel and lubricants, will reduce emissions of CO_2 by 145,000 tonnes over five years, and BP says use of advanced oils and tighter fuel management will deliver 7% fuel savings - £2 million before costs.

Arriva has drawn the new agreement with BP's newly-formed Fleet Services Business Unit.

Want to know more about saving fuel and lubricant costs? See pages 24 and 25.

Advertise on-line for just £15

VEHICLE advertisers using *CBW's* new website at *www.cbwnet.co.uk* are being offered a £10 discount on on-line adverts placed before August 19.

It means the UK's only on-line PSV marketplace is even better value for anyone wanting to sell a vehicle fast. Announcing the offer, *CBW* editor Mark Williams said: "Cbwnet is already changing the way operators sell their vehicles - but we want even more people to try out our innovative website. At just £15 for an on-line advert, it represents the best way of getting your vehicle seen by a massive potential audience."

Cheaper prices are on the cards for Shuttle users

Eurotunnel: coaches down

THE number of coaches carried by Eurotunnel fell by more than 5,000 in the first six months of the year - blamed on a falling market and competition from low-cost airlines.

This 14% decline - and corresponding fall in market share to 33% - was matched by falling numbers of cars carried, though truck business rose marginally. Operating profit for the heavily indebted operator slumped from £78m to £70m, while turnover and revenue also fell significantly.

However, while the company's core shuttle business saw falls, rail traffic from passengers and freight scored major increases of 20% and 15% respectively.

In a statement, the company said: "We have identified the conditions that need to be addressed internally to bring about a recovery... a revival of activity by completely redefining our commercial strategy and tariff structure and, on the other hand, by improving operating margins through a major overhaul of organisation and methods leading to cost reductions."

It could mean cheaper fares as the company seeks to increase volume and compete better with ferry companies.

There is little new for bus companies in the transport strategy, but endorsement of Quality Partnerships

Quality Contract timeframe cut in new transport strategy

THE timeframe needed for local authorities to introduce quality contracts will be cut in the latest Government transport strategy.

It means local authorities with 'radical' plans will be able to specify service levels, timetables and fares in six months rather than the current 21.

The strategy also allows passenger transport executives to buy buses for lease to operators, allowing quality to be improved at little risk to operators.

However, there is little new for bus operators, and no mention of coach, in the strategy, though the Government has confirmed that the Bus Services Operator Grant scheme will remain unchanged.

Even so, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to buses. Announcing the strategy to the House of Commons, transport secretary Alistair Darling said: "The vast majority of travel by public transport is by bus... many people depend on it. As I've said before, where councils and bus operators work together in partnership bus use increases and we want to see more of that."

The Transport & General Workers Union deputy general secretary Jack Dromey commented: "Buses are the best and quickest way to deliver improvements in public transport use. They are a win-win situation for local authorities to have a much more focussed and robust say in local routes planning and fare levels."

The Confederation of Passenger Transport, which represents much of the PSV industry, said of Mr Darling's speech: "He has shown commitment to the bus and, most importantly, clarity of vision."

CPT Director General Brian Nimick added: "He clearly stated what we have known all along; most areas are best served by Quality Partnerships. We are also pleased that he has clarified the Government's position on Quality Contracts. The fact that, other than for rail substitutions, the tests laid down in the Transport Act 2000 remain unaltered, sends a clear and welcome message.

"For too long there have been arguments about legislation and not enough actions for passengers. It is, therefore, vital that local authorities and bus operators redouble their efforts to work together, in partnership, to provide passengers with a bus network fit for the 21st Century."

Among areas highlighted for increasing bus use are Leicestershire, Cambridge, Oxfordshire and Telford.

However, further light-rail schemes appear to have been ruled out: "No government could accept these schemes as they are on the basis of these cost escalations. We, therefore, cannot approve them," said Mr Darling.

But West Yorkshire PTE Metro says it remains confident in its Leeds Supertram scheme. New chairman Stanley King said: "I am confident that, in September, we will be in a position to go back to the DfT with a new proposal that achieves the cost reductions Alistair Darling requires."

Road charging is being examined, and the long-planned London Crossrail scheme has finally been given the go-ahead.

Solent Blue Line refurbishes 30 buses

SOLENT Blue Line is upgrading 30 of its vehicles in a 12-month refurbishment programme.

The first vehicles to enter the programmer were 16 lowfloor deckers, now in the operator's royal blue livery. Two Dennis Darts are now in all-over blue and fitted with new Rowan Telmac seats. They have been equipped with Mobitec LED destination displays.

Four Volvo Olympians have been refurbished and painted in the livery of a local supermarket.

The next stage of the programme is to perform a mid-life upgrade on eight Volvo and Leyland Olympian deckers, which will see new flooring material, new seats and some fitted with destination displays.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NCT fares to rise

Many Nottingham City Transport fares are set to rise to ensure it maintains service standards. Most rises are limited to less than £1, but 28-day season tickets will rise by around £3.

VCA opens in Malaysia

The Vehicle Certification Agency is opening a new office in Malaysia that will see the organisation work with local suppliers on UK vehicle type approval and management certification.

First award

First in Manchester is celebrating the award of 'Positive about disabled people status' in recognition of its approach to employing disabled staff. First Manchester's managing director for bus services, Bob Mason, was presented with the award last week - and eight depots in the North-West region have passed the criteria set by organising body Job Centre Plus.

Dublin study

Millward Brown IMS, in association with FaberMaunsell, has been commissioned by Dublin Transportation Office to undertake a comprehensive survey involving over 3,000 interviews with householders, shops and businesses about the new state-of-the-art LUAS Light Rail Transit system.

Resort open-topper

Great Yarmouth is now the proud custodian of a sightseeing bus. The open-topper is giving guided, 45-minute tours around some of the town's attractions until September 5. The project is the brainchild of David McMaster, who runs a similar service in Norwich.

Bus abandoned

Police have appealed to passengers of a bus abandoned after it crashed into a tree. The vehicle was left in a layby on the A48 at Blakeney, Gloucestershire and police who found it said the bus's doors were open but no-one was in the vehicle.

Champs contract

For the second year running John Flanagan Coach Travel transported over 120 wheelchair-bound competitors in last week's British Open Wheelchair Tennis Championships at Nottingham's International Tennis Centre.

Stagecoach plans to trial Designline hybrid in UK

MARTIN COLE TECHNICAL AND MINIBUS EDITOR

STAGECOACH is to begin UK trials with a diesel/electric hybrid bus that it has already introduced into service in New Zealand.

It will enter service in Newcastle on a special service supported by Nexus (the PTE).

The move is part of a bid by Stagecoach to encourage local authorities to consider introducing the environmentally-friendly vehicles. The bus was created by Designline and has been successfully operated by Stagecoach in Wellington. It starts its UK tour in Carlisle and the Lake District from August 9 before moving to Coventry and Leamington on August 25, to Oxford from September 13 and finishing with a fortnight at Winchester from September 27. Other dates may be announced if the trial is extended.

Vehicle will enter Newcastle Nexus-supported service

Bus already in service in New Zealand

The hybrid can run emission-free in densely-populated areas - switching back to turbine generation to provide electricity in less sensitive parts. Additional battery charging comes from a regenerative braking system.

Modified slightly to comply with UK requirements, the hybrid has seating for 30 passengers and standing capacity for a further 30.

The hybrid electric bus is already committed for Newcastle after Stagecoach North East was named preferred bidder for a premier service in the city.

Nexus and the councils in Newcastle and Gateshead plan to run a service connecting Newcastle City Centre, the Quayside and new developments on the Gateshead side of the River Tyne.

Nine of the £200,000 vehicles are expected to operate on the route, with the service planned to start spring/summer next year.

Stagecoach UK Bus MD Les Warneford said: "This vehicle has real potential to improve the quality of life in our towns and cities and is further evidence of Stagecoach's commitment to minimising the impact of our operations on the environment."

Meanwhile, Stagecoach continues its commercial evaluation of the Oxonica fuel additive with nanotechnology that could transform the environmental and operational performance of buses.

Initial trials of the nanocatalyst in the North-West indicate a 5% fuel consumption reduction, a significant cut in carbon deposits in the engine, and lower vehicle emissions. The second stage of the trial, covering buses in London, is nearing completion.

Arriva expands its Danish business with purchase of Wulff Bus A/S

CONTINUALLY expanding Arriva plc has announced the 100% purchase of Danish bus operator Wulff Bus A/S.

The £10.3m deal is scheduled for completion in August, conditional upon receiving consent from local transport tendering authorities. Arriva proposes to settle the purchase in cash from its existing facilities.

Wulff Bus has its major activities centred on citybus and regional services in Jutland. It employs approximately 600 employees and runs a fleet of 300 vehicles. Results for the year ended December 31 2003 show Wulff returned a turnover of Danish Krona (DK) 254 million (£23.6 million) with an operating profit of DK 23.6 million (£2.2 million). Net assets were DK 28.8 million (£2.7 million) including net debt of DK 145 million (£13.5 million). Arriva says the acquisition will be immediately earnings enhancing before the amortisation of goodwill.

Arriva began operating in Denmark in 1997 and is now the major bus services operator with around a third of the national market and a 40% share in the Greater Copenhagen Area. The company also operates two passenger rail franchises in Jutland.

Arriva chief executive Bob Davies said: "Wulff's bus operations in Jutland and Copenhagen have a strong geographic fit with our existing business. This acquisition provides an excellent opportunity to deliver increased service efficiency and quality. In Jutland we will be able to focus on developing greater integration of public transport."

Volvo sales up and bus division in profit

VOLVO Group has seen year-on-year increases in sales and revenue, with the bus division moving into operating profit.

Volvo is benefiting from FirstGroup's order for 486 Volvo-chassised vehicles from Wrights. The chassis will be built at its Boras plant in Sweden. Net sales for buses amounted to £261m, an increase of 19% adjusted for currency effects. The bus division reported an operating profit of £6.5m for the second quarter, compared with an operating loss of £6.43m in 2003. Operating margin also improved, from a 2.9% loss last year to a 2.5% profit this time.

In the second quarter of this financial year, it sold 2,269 coaches and buses in Europe. During the same three months last year, it sold 1,864.

Operating margin for buses was 2.5% - compared with a 2.9% loss during the same period last year.

The company undertook efficiency measures to boost production but it warns that order booking remains uncertain and that it is reviewing operations.

Volvo has also been hit by difficulties experienced by Henlys, which recently suspended trading of shares following falls in price. It wrote down the value of its shares by around £6.8m.

Net sales across the group were £3.83bn, up £610m from the same time last year.

Police need help for project

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Police is seeking volunteers to help restore a bus that will be used to tackle anti-social behaviour.

A local project called Natural High bought the bus for young people in Ramsey and St Ives to meet in.

Community contact officer Angie Walters said: "This bus will make a big difference to the lives of many young people."

The purpose-built platform can accommodate vehicles from minibuses to those up to 19 metres in length

New chassis wash 'cleans up'

WESLEY Washman says its new automated chassis wash lets operators clean their vehicles with no health and safety problems and makes maintenance easier - without using a pit.

The system uses raised ramps and, once the vehicle is in position, high-pressure spinning washer heads traverse the length of the vehicle on a special carriage. On the first pass, the chassis is coated with a chemical spray and, after that, high-pressure hot water is jetted on to the chassis at up to 80 litres per minute.

The company's MD, Mike West, said: "In the long run, this will save time, money and extend the working life of vehicles."

The purpose-built platform can accommodate vehicles from minibuses to those up to 19 metres in length. The washer is suitable for indoor or outdoor installation, can recycle water used and clean itself at the end of each wash.

Wesley claims chassis cleaning can be halved by the machine, with capacity of up to 20 vehicles per day.

● For more information, contact Mike West on 0113 279 0015, or visit *www.wesleygroup.co.uk*

Safety drive

PASSENGER and driver safety are the key features of a new drive by DaimlerChrysler to heighten awareness of the safety provision built into its vehicles.

EvoBus, DaimlerChrysler's subsidiary responsible for coach and bus operations, is to promote the latest safety measures among operators and passengers with a newly designed set of safety instructions, a brochure, plus illustrative audio material.

All Mercedes-Benz Travego touring coaches, Setra TopClass 400 and ComfortClass 400 touring coaches are now supplied with information cards with a format similar to aircraft safety instruction cards.

They have been devised together with the Federal Association of German Bus & Coach Operators and inform passengers of the exact location of door openers, emergency window hammers, roof escape hatches and fire extinguishers in six languages.

The cards form part of the safety package provided by OMNIplus - the customer-service brand of Setra and Mercedes-Benz. The package also includes OMNIplus information brochure 'All-round Bus & Coach Safety', and there is a CD and DVD.

Solaris seeks 'urgent' expansion

POLISH manufacturer Solaris Bus & Coach has reported a successful first half of the year - claiming to be optimistic and confident about the future.

The company manufactured and delivered 188 buses in the first six months and a further 312 units are scheduled for delivery before the end of the year. Orders received to date exceed original expectations and call for a virtual doubling of production capacity.

"Our order intake this year has been extremely encouraging", said Krzysztof Olszewski, chairman of Solaris Bus & Coach. "Only after the first three months of this year our order book covered 70% of our annual production capacity."

May and June saw further sizeable orders taken from customers in the Baltic States. Solaris signed a contract to supply 63 lowfloor buses to the Latvian capital Riga with a further 55 Urbino 12 buses for Kaunas in Lithuania. The company won a major order for 45 trolleybuses for the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, with 15 units due for delivery this year.

Solaris has also had encouraging orders from Germany, Switzerland and France.

Export success has been generated on top of strong home market performance where it has captured almost 70% of the lowfloor bus market. A total of 67 buses were delivered to Polish operators in the first half of the year.

Current plans for expansion include the erection of a new production facility and optimisation of existing production processes. A number of new models are scheduled for introduction at the IAA exhibition in Hanover during September.

Solaris: order intake this year 'extremely encouraging'

NEWS IN BRIEF

Festival record

A record number of passengers used the special Citylink services to the recent T in the Park festival. There was a 25% increase in passengers using the services from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Perth to the festival site at Balado, near Kinross. Two hundred buses were used over four days making over 1,000 trips.

Draft welcomed but...

The European Tour Operators Association (ETOA) has welcomed the inclusion of tourism in the EU draft constitution. However, ETOA also pointed out that the draft begs a number of questions and says nothing about the main issues confronting tourism in Europe that urgently need to be addressed by policy makers.

GALILEO study

FaberMaunsell is undertaking a road transport study on behalf of the European Commission's Directorate-General Joint Research Centre, Institute for Prospective Technological Studies. The project aims to assess the impact of the new European Global Navigation Satellite System GALILEO on road transport.

Code updated

The Countryside Agency is launching a new version of the Countryside Code updated to reflect recent changes in law. See *www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk* for more information.

EST consultation

The Energy Saving Trust is consulting about future development of its TransportEnergy grant programmes. In the last financial year, its PowerShift and CleanUp programmes funded almost 10,000 vehicles.

Lowfloor visit

Travel West Midlands has sent a lowfloor bus to the Queens Cross Day Centre in Dudley to 'educate' potential passengers about the features of new vehicles .

Tenders won

Stagecoach has won two Gloucestershire County Council tenders. Stagecoach South Wales has won the Elton Corner to Chepstow route, and Stagecoach West the Stroud to Stanhope service.

Three becomes one for Sleafordian Coaches

ANDY RODEN REPORTER

£600,000 move combines previous sites

SLEAFORDIAN Coaches finally completed its move to new premises this month after what it describes as "some hectic months" while its new depot on Pride Parkway, Sleaford, Lincs, was completed.

It was opened by Lincoln City football club manager Keith Alexander and the whole first team last week. Sleafordian is a sponsor of the Coca Cola League Two side.

Built at a cost of £600,000 the new site was engineered by Smith Construction of Heckington and has capacity for 28 vehicles, allowing useful expansion from Sleafordian's current fleet of 16.

The new site is much better suited to Sleaford and to the nature of its business, bringing the company's previous three sites under one roof. It means staff will not have to travel between sites, or to refuel and maintain vehicles. The relocation has allowed Sleafordian to build a customer car park - something that previously caused problems as parking in the town centre can prove difficult at times.

The town of Sleaford itself will benefit as well. Sleafordian coaches and buses will no longer hold up queues of traffic when reversing in and out of the old Westgate Garage and, with the access to the A17 right next to the new site, Sleafordian doesn't have to use the town as much.

Maintenance staff benefit from new 30-tonne lifts, as well as a 16-metre inspection pit and sundry machines such as compressors. It gives the company the ability to undertake all repairs and inspections except for MOT tests.

Says Sleafordian managing director Mark Broughton: "Our staff are tremendously impressed and much happier at our new site. The offices are a massive improvement to the portable buildings we had at Westgate for space and presentation.

"I'm really proud of what we've achieved here - it gives us a really sound base to generate new business and improve what we already do."

Mr Broughton said his father, Don Broughton, who founded the company, was also proud of the new site.

Originally based at Westgate from the early 1970s, Sleafordian made its first move to Mareham Lane (the old Wing's depot) in July 2003. Its fleet expanded to 16 vehicles and there was better accommodation for all at Mareham Lane.

The company remained at Mareham Lane until January 2004 when it was split into three different sites. The workshop staff remained at Mareham Lane, while coaches and drivers went to Mountains Yard off London Road, and office staff returned to Westgate.

New premises cost £600,000

Construction of the new depot started in January 2004. Mr Broughton told *CBW*: "We watched the site change from an open field into the purpose-built premises we have today from January until the June 30 when we moved in, just in time for our 40th anniversary on July 10."

W&D wins new deal

WILTS & Dorset has won the contract to operate buses at two park-&-ride sites in Salisbury - and has ordered new buses from Volvo for them.

New sites at Wilton and Britford are due to open next year and Wilts & Dorset will run buses every ten minutes during peak times to the city centre. Off peak they will run between every ten and 12 minutes.

Ken backs LTA

MAYOR of London Ken Livingstone is giving his backing to the second London Transport Awards, which take place in March 2005.

Local authorities and transport organisations are being invited to enter the scheme. Categories include Public Transport Operator of the Year, technology and transport team of the year.

EXCLUSIVE Keswick coach parking

COACH parking in the Lake District town of Keswick is set to improve with the redevelopment of coach-parking facilities.

Under plans currently being drawn up, the current bus station in front of the E.H. Booths supermarket will be relocated to the existing coach-parking bays at the rear of the shop. It will mean space for coaches is cut from the current 12 to eight full-size vehicles and four minibus bays, with stands for four to five buses.

However, to mitigate against this loss of space, *CBW* understands plans are close to being finalised to provide 20 long-stay parking spaces away from the town centre and for the current coach-parking to be turned into

Buses are being colour-coded to match the Manchester Overground map

First expands GM Overground

FIRST Manchester is expanding its Manchester Overground network to four routes in the north of the area.

Buses are being colour-coded to match the Manchester Overground map, and before roll-out, each route will be examined to take into account customer and driver comments.

The routes are among those that will benefit for First's £34m, 280-vehicle order for Greater Manchester, announced in March.

Passengers will benefit from better route information, both on buses and in new leaflets being distributed on the bus and in GMPTE travel shops.

The routes involved are 82, from Waterhead to Manchester via Oldham, 83, from Sholver to Manchester via Oldham. 409, which serves Ashton, Oldham and Rochdale, and 501, which goes to Farnworth, Bolton General Hospital, Bolton and Moss Bank way.

Hayton's moves to new depot

MANCHESTER premier coach company-Hayton's has moved to a new state-of-the-art depot at Gorton Lane, Gorton, Manchester.

The depot features a workshop with the latest equipment, including a paintshop. Hayton's runs a fleet of 17 vehicles, including a pair of East Lancs Cityzen Scania double deckers (ex Maynes).

Most of the coach fleet comprises Volvo B10Ms and for that special job Hayton's runs a Noge Catalan-bodied MAN.

is set for upgrade

a pick-up and drop-off point.

Local observers say the current facilities are rarely full and that the loss in coach parking in the town centre will be offset by the improvement in bus services.

Currently, the main operator, Stagecoach, has to use two laybys either side of a busy road, something health and safety regulations prohibit for new facilities.

The plans are being welcomed by operators. Southampton company Angela Coaches operates tours to the Lake District and day-to-day operations manager John Davies says: "Keswick's not too bad at the moment for parking - you can normally get in and out okay.

"Long-stay would be better for our use - as long as drivers know that the existing site would be for pick up and drop off, it wouldn't be a problem."

With the likes of Wallace Arnold and Shearings running tours to Keswick that can sometimes see four or five coaches arriving at once, having 20 long-term spaces could be a real boon for an area that, increasingly, is seeking to cut the number of cars entering.

TRAIL

Keswick - just visible in this shot - is looking to improve coach parking

Coming

Next Week

New for next term...
Another school's Bill is on the way through Parliament. We look at the implications

MAN, what a chassis
A ride-and-drive preview of MAN's latest at this year's Hanover show

On *cbwnet.co.uk*...

- What do you think of your Traffic Area Office? Cast your vote...
- VOSA launches 'Power to Stop'

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Legal News - Yorkshire Traction at public inquiry

Tour News - What's on offer for 2005

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Water-ever the weather

MARK BARTON TOURISM EDITOR

VisitBritain campaign to boost sea and waterside destinations

SEA and waterside destinations are to receive a boost next year from the latest VisitBritain nationwide marketing campaign.

The watersideEngland campaign, launched in association with Waterscape.com, Tourism South East and Bristol City, promotes thousands of themed options across the nine regions of England that can be enjoyed whatever the weather. The accompanying brochure encompasses leisure time opportunities for consumers across the topics of inland waterways, watersports, maritime attractions and seafood and drink.

The watersideEngland campaign complements another impending marketing initiative from VisitBritain. Due to launch later this year, Sea Britain 2005 will celebrate Britain's rich maritime history and has been inspired by the bicentenary of The Battle of Trafalgar.

The Royal Navy has unveiled plans to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Trafalgar with a series of group-friendly events next year. High-profile commemorations are being planned in Portsmouth for the summer of 2005 and London in October 2005.

Between June 30 and July 3 an International Festival of the Sea will be held in Portsmouth Naval Base. Visitors will have the opportunity to go aboard many of the tall ships, warships, yachts and other vessels, talk to the crews and find out about life onboard.

Dynamic displays will offer a sample of the Armed Forces' combination of land, air and sea capabilities. Other events are likely to include a special dinner on board HMS Victory, a service in St Paul's Cathedral and an event in Trafalgar Square.

As part of the waterside England campaign, VisitBritain has produced an impressive 60-page free guide, saturated with information on waterside pursuits in England, including listings of key events taking place in each region. It also includes a 16-page supplement on SeaBritain 2005 activities. Free copies on 0845 408 1805 or visit *www.visitengland.com/waterside*

Events are likely to include a special dinner on board HMS Victory

● British Waterways' comprehensive on-line guide to the UK's waterways - *Waterscape.com* - offers hundreds of ideas to help make the most of England's rivers, lakes and canals, including the largest on-line selection of waterside holiday accommodation.

Fewer coach park spaces at Skeggie

DUE to the construction of a new Tesco and coach station, Skegness's Richmond Drive Coach Park will have only 20 coach-parking spaces available this season.

East Lindsey District Council acknowledges that this will mean fewer coach-parking spaces but says it is aiming to minimise any disruption. The council is providing alternative coach parking on the Northend/Seaview car park, off North Parade, opposite the Town Hall on the seafront. Nearby toilets are open all summer.

It is expected that all works will be completed by the end of 2004 and a substantial coach park at Richmond Drive will be open from 2005 onwards at the rear of the new Tesco store.

Wroxeter, claimed to be site of Camelot, was fourth largest city in Roman Britain

On The Trail of King Arthur in Shropshire

SHROPSHIRE Tourism has launched a new booklet to coincide with the release of the major new King Arthur movie.

On The Trail of King Arthur in Shropshire seeks to reinforce Shropshire's image as a land of mystery and supports the claim that King Arthur came from and was buried in the county.

The trail contained in the new leaflet follows a route around the county - calling at, among other places, a priory where Guinevere is said to have lived, a cave where the Grail is meant to be hidden, and an ancient stone circle where Arthur is supposed to have drawn the sword from the stone.

● ***Free copies from 01743 462462 or enquiries@shropshiretourism.info***

● ***Internet:*** **www.shropshire-tourism.info/king-arthur**

Applause launches Summer Spectacular brochure

TICKET agency Applause has launched a Summer Spectacular brochure featuring ideas for days out with tickets at group rates to the best of this summer's events, exhibitions, attractions and sightseeing-packages.

Head of sales and marketing for Keith Prowse Ticketing and Tours, which includes Applause, Susan Phelan, believes the new brochure will be an invaluable source of ideas and reference for coach operators: "With details and group rates for 20 of this summer's most appealing days out we hope the Summer Spectacular brochure will be a source of inspiration to operators.

"A huge range of products is featured including perennial favourites such as The Summer Opening of The Houses of Parliament to visiting exhibitions at London's top galleries such as The National Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum and London attractions and sightseeing packages - something for all tastes."

Applause sells tickets for an increasing range of entertainment products including theatre, attractions, events, exhibitions, flower shows and royal palaces.

● ***Copies of the Summer Spectacular brochure on 70148440 or via e-mail*** **coach@seatem.com**

Courtyard for coach groups

CASTLE Howard, York says its Stable Courtyard is the perfect destination for refreshments and shopping on tours or excursions from York to the East Coast or vice versa.

Open every day (except Christmas day), the Stable Courtyard currently houses a gift shop (right), glass blowing studio, book shop and cafe. Next door is the recently opened Castle Howard Plant Centre. There is plenty of free coach parking and a new chocolate shop, farm shop and refurbished cafe is due to open this autumn.

During the weekends running up to Christmas there will be additional attractions within the Stable Courtyard, choirs and brass bands will be entertaining shoppers to add to the Christmas atmosphere.

Guided tours of the castle grounds can be arranged for groups for a 'small fee'.

● ***More details on 01653 648621. Page 180 of Coach Operator's Handbook.***

Guided walking tours for groups offered to UK coach operators

A NEW series of guided walking tours for groups is being offered to UK coach operators running tours or excursions to Royal Tunbridge Wells.

Organised by the borough council, the tours last an hour. They are conducted by local Blue Badge Guides, who aim to bring to life the buildings and 400-year history of the popular Kent spa town.

Highlights are the famous Pantiles colonnade, the Chalybeate Spring, historic High St area and the town's Georgian heyday.

Tickets cost £2 per person for groups of at least 20 and include a glass of Chalybeate Spring water. Tours are available by prior arrangement throughout the year and can be provided in most foreign languages. Longer, tailor-made tours can also be arranged on request to suit individual group requirements and particular interests.

● ***Details and bookings on 01892 515675, e-mail*** **touristinformationcentre@tunbridgewells.gov.uk** ***or visit*** **www.visittunbridgewells.com**

Flower power rules at Leeds Castle festival

THE finest displays of seasonal flowers and harvest produce from the Garden of England will be on show at Leeds Castle, near Maidstone, Kent, from October 6 - 10.

This year, the Autumn Gold Flower Festival takes visitors on a voyage through floral art, which is themed around the historic castle rooms - and Kent members of the National Association of Flower Arrangers Society (NAFAS), some of whom are Chelsea Gold and Malvern Spring Garden Medal winners, will be creating the floral arrangements.

The castle chapel will be transformed with designs inspired by the 16th Century wooden carvings; Henry VIII's Banqueting Hall will feature a floral tapestry arrangement made with seasonal flowers, fruit and vegetables based on the rare wall-hanging on show; and the Yellow Drawing Room will incorporate displays reflecting the theme of music and musical instruments, particularly based on the piano in the room.

Visitors can also stroll round the picturesque parkland, which include formal and informal gardens, a vineyard as well as a yew-maze with underground grotto and a unique dog collar museum.

Tickets to the Autumn Gold Festival, which include admission to castle's park, cost £12.50 adults, £11 senior citizens and £9 children 4-15 years, with discount for groups.

● ***More details on 0870 600 8880 or visit www.leeds-castle.com or see page 146 of Coach Operator's Handbook.***

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Clarke joins MAHA to boost sales team

ANDREW RODEN REPORTER

Support for garage equipment supplier distributors

GARAGE equipment supplier MAHA UK is welcoming Peter Clarke to its sales team.

Mr Clarke (right) will provide support to the company's distributors in central and North-West England, as well as promoting sales of the company's commercial vehicle test lanes.

Mr Clarke started his career in the garage equipment industry with Brown Brothers' garage equipment division, where he worked in the UK and the middle east. One of the original members of Gemco in 1986, he later joined Trojan Garage Equipment in South Gloucestershire.

Speaking to *CBW*, he said: "It's a great opportunity to join MAHA - they have really good products, and I'm looking forward to expanding its sales. It's a very professional company."

His boss, director of sales and marketing Kevin Howard, said: "We are delighted to have Peter as part of our team. His previous experience in the garage equipment industry will aid MAHA's continuing success in supplying quality test and inspection equipment to garages and motor manufacturers. He has a thorough knowledge and understanding of the motor industry which will naturally be a great benefit to MAHA."

Among MAHA's customers are the Vehicle Inspectorate, bus companies Arriva and First, as well as smaller bus and truck operators. Its main base is in Wisbech, Cambs, and among recent successes are the installation of test equipment in First's Willesden depot in London, where special attention was needed to ensure it could fully test the articulated buses the operator uses.

JMP director chairs commuter association

JMP Consulting's divisional director, Dr Colin Black (below), has been elected new chairman of the UK Association for Commuter Transport.

He succeeds Alastair Duff, who has retired after completing his three-year term. ACT was originally set up to represent private-sector views on transportation issues affecting their organisations.

Speaking at the ACT summer conference earlier this year at Chester, Dr Black said: "Over the next three years we will continue to expand membership services, particularly the provision of our extremely successful training courses. Targeted training is vital to help broaden the capabilities of those professionals involved in the fast-expanding field of travel planning."

In his day job, Colin is responsible for transport planning in JMP's London West End office and the company claims he is "internationally recognised" for his work on sustainable transport strategy research ,development and implementation.

Meanwhile, JMP continues to strengthen its team with the appointment of Emma Thompson, a specialist in traffic engineering, to its Leeds office as senior consultant. She had previously worked with FaberMaunsell in Yorkshire.

KMP is also providing £7,000 of free consultancy services to Warwickshire County Council after an employee won a competition. Lee White, from the council's transport planning group, won the prize at the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers' summer conference and JMP will look at issues relating to the sustainability of bus services to new housing developments.

Rohill manager takes new seat

FORMER Rohill area sales manager Paul Hughes (below) is set to join Cogent Passenger Seating as its new national sales manager.

Before his role at Rohill, Mr Hughes worked for Britax. Cogent says it is expanding its product range and that Paul's appointment "is integral to the continuing sustained growth that is programmed." Mr Hughes will report to commercial director Roger Pownall.

Cogent supplies a full range of seats, from specialist welfare types to 3+2 school transport seats and coach-style recliners. The usual accessories such as grab handles, armrests, magazine racks and a variety of mountings are also available.

TELL US YOUR PERSONNEL NEWS

CBW* is the place to shout about your latest appointments - from boardroom to shop floor. If you have any personnel changes, contact reporter Andy Roden on 0870 062 1163, or e-mail *andrew.roden@emap.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

Neoman hires new press officer

Neoman Bus Group has appointed former trade magazine editor Thorsten Wagner to its Stuttgart press office.

New vice president for Johnson

Johnson Controls' new executive vice president and general manager, Europe, will be Dr Beda-Helmut Bolzenius. He joins from Robert Bosch GmbH, where he held a senior role.

Licensing & Legal

Bus fleet cut by a third over maintenance snags

Taxico can now run only 12 vehicles after five vehicles given prohibitions

Maintenance

A BUS operator has been told to reduce his fleet size for the second time in a year - after a disciplinary hearing over vehicle maintenance failures.

Gary Goldstraw, owner of the Taxico bus company, based in Leek, Staffordshire, was brought before a public inquiry after five vehicles in its 18-strong working fleet were given prohibition notices.

The inquiry also heard how Mr Goldstraw's father Barry had removed the operator's licences from two of Taxico's buses when warned about a surprise vehicle inspection, so it appeared that they were not being used on the road.

Mr Goldstraw will now only be allowed to operate a fleet of 12 buses.

The penalty, ordered by West Midlands traffic commissioner David Dixon, came less than a year after he ordered Taxico's fleet to be reduced from 20 to 18 at a similar disciplinary hearing over maintenance failures last August.

He told Mr Goldstraw at the public inquiry in Birmingham on July 19: "I cannot let you run 18 vehicles as I am still concerned about you getting to grips with the vehicle condition - the standard of the day-to-day caring for the vehicles is not good enough.

"Last time I reduced your fleet from 20 to 18 but, in retrospect, I feel that may have been too lenient.

"Mr Dixon warned Mr Goldstraw that, if he was called up before a public inquiry for a third time, he would almost certainly revoke his licence to operate completely.

David Dixon: 'action unacceptable'

The inquiry heard from VOSA representative Bernard Stubbs, who inspected 11 of Taxico's vehicles on an unannounced visit to the company's Cheadle and Leak depots on May 7.

He told how five out of 11 buses inspected were given prohibitions, including two immediate and three delayed.

One bus was found to have an oil leak from the engine and an oil leak from the gearbox dripping on to the road - for which a delayed prohibition was issued.

Another vehicle was given an S-marked prohibition for a leaking exhaust and a deteriorating suspension anchor pin that was no longer secure in its bracket.

A third bus was found to have a fractured brake disc and a kinked and cracked exhaust system and was issued with a delayed prohibition.

A "seriously under-inflated" tyre was the reason for placing an immediate prohibition on a fourth vehicle and a delayed prohibition was placed on a fifth bus with a loose brake actuator.

Mr Stubbs explained how safety inspection records had been carefully kept, record-

Ward off the problems with *CBW* defect books

Essential: drivers' detail book

IF YOU don't have a daily driver defect reporting system, you're running the risk of losing your O-licence.

That message comes over loud and clear almost every week in *CBW*'s legal reports, yet all it takes to begin to address the traffic commissioners' concerns is a short phone call to Ward International Consulting and a few pounds spent on its excellent Drivers Daily Defect Books and PSV Inspection Pads.

CBW has long endorsed these duplicate books - devised by top consultant, the late Colin Ward - as a simple but effective way to ensure you aren't relying on word of mouth to alert your fitters to problems, and that fitters make thorough checks according to DfT guidelines.

The Drivers Daily Defect Books is designed to be small enough to pop into dashboards and pockets, and simple to fill in. It provides the driver, traffic office and workshop with a copy of defect reports - or nil defect reports.

The PSV maintenance inspection pad provides double-sided reporting sheets with clear references to the DfT Inspection Manual for each item. It allows for reporting of faults and signing off subsequent repairs.

On top of this, Ward's maintenance wall planners - covering 15 months - can help you schedule the upkeep of as many as 45 vehicles and, at £10 plus VAT each, are perfect for small operating businesses.

Prices for the Drivers Daily Defect Books are £3.60 plus VAT, for each 40-sheet book. The PSV Inspection Pad is priced at £4 plus VAT for each 50-sheet book. Just call Ward direct on 01329 280280 with your credit card number.

Other Inquiries

North Western Traffic Area

MERSEYSIDE, June 14, 2004
Murray John William, t/a Murrays Airport Transfer Services, Liverpool.
● Action: S16 - condition attached limiting the number of vehicles to be operated at any one time to five vehicles only with immediate effect.
Repute of operator and transport manager tarnished.

BLACKPOOL, June 22, 2004
Steven Taylor t/a Easy Travel, Liverpool.
● Action: S14 - application granted as applied for
BURNLEY, LANCASHIRE, June 25, 2004
Blackburn Borough Transport Ltd, Blackburn, Lancs
● Action: formal warning with undertaking recorded.

Scottish Traffic Area

GLASGOW, July 08, 2004
John James McNairn t/a JJ Travel, Coatbridge.
● Action: PSV, S17, No action, agreed to surrender of the licence with effect from August 31 2004.
S39 - Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 penalty of £150 per vehicle.

EDINBURGH, July 08, 2004
Linn Park Buses Ltd, Glasgow
● Action: PSV, S14, Application granted for ten vehicles (application amended at inquiry reducing proposed vehicular authority from 20 vehicles to ten vehicles).

EDINBURGH, July 08, 2004
Caledonian Coach Co Ltd t/a Caledonian Buses
● Action: PSV, S17, Condition attached to the licence restricting the operator to four local service registrations for six months from the date of the public inquiry.

South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area

EASTBOURNE, March 29, 2004
TM Hawthorne & DP Hunnisett t/a RDH Services, Plumpton Lewes, E Sussex
● Action: Penalty imposed under Section 155(2) of the 2000 Act of £3,300 (ie, 44 vehicles x £75).

EASTBOURNE, June 28, 2004
Michael Trimmer t/a Trimmer Travel, Romford, Essex
● Action: Public Inquiry Cancelled.

North Eastern Traffic Area

LEEDS, June 24, 2004
Jean Beatrice and Craig Porteous t/a Alpha Coach Co and Grey Deluxe Coaches, Hull
● Action: PSV S17, formal warning.

LEEDS, June 24, 2004
Seecroft Travel Ltd t/a Applebys of Hull/Northbank Travel/Halcyon Leisure, Hull
● Action: PSV S16, condition attached that no more than 18 vehicles can be operated.
PSV, S17, formal warning.

LEEDS, June 24, 2004
Maureen Hardy and M O Shan t/a TJ Cars, Cleveland
● Action: PSV, S17, licence revoked with immediate effect 2359 hrs June 24 2004
PSV, S28, Mr M Shan and Ms M Hardy disqualified indefinitely with immediate effect 2359hrs June 24 2004.

Western Traffic Area

BRISTOL, JULY 05, 2004
Simon J Wellington and Sharon Wellington t/a Tally Ho Coaches, Kingsbridge, Devon
● Action - Public inquiry held in The Ballroom, The Shrubbery Hotel, Ilminster.
a) Under Section 16 of the PPV Act 1981, the licence is varied by reducing the number of authorised vehicles from 56 to 40 vehicles for 30 consecutive days from 2359hrs on July 31 2004.
b) The operator is to submit further evidence of financial standing by 2359hrs on December 31 2004.

ing both the monthly in-house safety checks and regular inspections carried out by outside contractors. He said: "Services and safety inspections were being carried out but this was not being reflected in the vehicles I inspected."

He explained how, in addition to full inspections, Taxico operated a 'Driver nil-defect reporting system'.

He said: "It's all right for drivers to fill in nil-defect reports if they are really looking at the vehicles before reporting no defects but this system needs to be policed to make sure the drivers are doing it.

"Mr Stubbs admitted that a driver would not have been able to spot a brake disc fracture or a cracked exhaust but something like a flat tyre would be easily seen by a driver carrying out routine checks.

In addition to the maintenance prohibitions, the inquiry considered how Mr Goldstraw's father Barry, who works as a fitter at Taxico, took operator licence discs out of the windscreens of two buses in the fleet when warned by his son that inspectors were on the way to the company's Cheadle depot.

Keith Algrante, a vehicle examiner, said: "I arrived at Taxico's depot in Cheadle and spoke to Barry Goldstraw, after noticing that two of the buses did not have their operator's discs and were displaying VOR plates. One of the vehicles had also had its vehicle tax disc removed but I found the engine temperatures on both vehicles to be hot, at 42 and 52 degrees.

"This showed they had both been used that day, it takes about two to three hours for an engine to cool down.

"Chris Harris, defending, read a letter to the hearing from Barry Goldstraw, 63, expressing his apologies for deceiving the vehicle examiners.

Part of the letter, addressed to the traffic commissioner, read: "I came back to the depot and found all the vehicles parked up and all the drivers except one had gone home.

'There was a deliberate intent to prevent these vehicles being examined by his own admission' - West Midlands traffic commissioner David Dixon

"I removed a tax disc and operator's licence and put a VOR board in a bus when the driver told me there was a problem. I put the board in because I didn't want my son to be seen to be operating such a vehicle."

In the letter, he also apologised for his actions and admitted his attempt to protect his son had been "naïve." In giving evidence, Gary Goldstraw explained that his father was merely an employee of the firm and not involved in any decision making, only driving and maintenance work.

He said: "My father repairs vehicles and drives them for Taxico. As the fitter, he has the power to remove vehicles from the road. After the vehicle inspectors had come to our base in Leak, I phoned him to tell him the inspectors were on their way to Cheadle. He must have panicked when he heard they were coming.

In giving his verdict, traffic commissioner David Dixon ordered that one condition of Taxico retaining its licence would be for Barry Goldstraw to play no part in the running of the company.

He said: "This action was completely unacceptable to me. There was a deliberate intent to prevent these vehicles being examined by his own admission. He says it was naive but nobody should be naive in looking after this kind of vehicle.

"But Barry Goldstraw is not the holder of the licence and he was doing this off his own bat."

Defending Taxico's vehicle maintenance record, Chris Harris said the vehicles issued with prohibitions had passed their MOTs earlier in the year and recent safety inspections.

One vehicle that received a prohibition for an oil leak from the engine and gear box had passed its MOT in August 2003 and been cleared by inspectors on April 20 - just two weeks before it received a delayed prohibition from inspectors.

He also added that Taxico was suffering significant wear to its buses' suspension systems after 21 speed bumps were introduced to its routes in Leak town centre a year ago.

He said: "Certain vehicles have to go over 1,500 speed bumps a week and others about 1,000. This could explain the very small gap between passing a safety inspection and receiving a prohibition."

Open platform

The future is in our hands

Peter Shelley has worked in the bus industry for 25 years and helped found Solent Blue Line in 1987 where, in latter years, he has been operations director. Here he gives his views on the future of the bus industry

SOME industry observers have expressed surprise at the apparently relaxed way in which bus operators and the CPT have responded to the Commission for Integrated Transport's (CfIT's) proposals for Quality Contract pilots - though, admittedly, no one has volunteered their 'patch' as a pilot yet.

There may be a reason for operators' attention being elsewhere - a new focus on outcome rather than process. It is, perhaps, that operators are seeing the first signs of hard-won success in rebuilding passenger volume and revenue growth after some difficult recent times.

At the recent Association of Local Bus Undertakings Managers' conference there was an air of confidence - a 'can-do' approach from operators who had got on and made their own successes.

We heard encouraging results from the Go2 network in Nottingham and 'The Zone' in Keighley. The lesson - while partnerships with local authorities were essential for delivering political 'buy-in', physical returns would be long run rather than short term. Council staff shortages and revenue-funding issues were probably here to stay for some time.

The message was not to allow our partners' difficulties stop operators using their own skills to drive their businesses forward.

Peter Shelley: aims for model operation

Increasingly, in recent years, a toolkit for successful operation has been assembled, drawing experience from smaller as well as large groups, municipals and independent operators. The key ingredients are identified as product, delivery and communication.

'Operators are now seeing the signs of hard-won success in building passenger volume'

A successful bus product will offer a simple network, easy-to-remember clock-face times and frequent services over a good span of day, not forgetting evenings and Sundays. Timetables should be clear at first glance: codes should be for secret agents. Buses are mass transit, they must do what they do best and separate modal shift from social inclusion roles. The latter can then be tailored to cater for school times and market days without frightening off mainstream customers. Busy buses persuade politicians towards priorities.

Delivery is achieved when operators become passionate about minimising lost mileage. A culture of 'can do', not excuses. This is aided by separating training and manpower planning to ensure there are sufficient staff from day-to-day service delivery. Devising quick-response strategies for the inevitablities of a real-time, real-world, business and getting the morning run out right are the only way to achieve credibility. Realistic timetables must reflect traffic conditions at different times of the day and times of the year.

Above all, buses are a people business so getting the key supervisor-driver relationship right means staff feel valued and stay with the company. As First Glasgow has shown, pay rates must reflect labour market conditions. Both elements give a financial payback as we deliver our customer promises and cover services reliably and efficiently.

Communications involves ensuring that our staff and customers know our plans and wishes and are involved in contributing to them. A newsletter is a good start for both functions. Publicity need not be expensive and can often be produced in house. Canteen talks have proved effective at stimulating interest, ideas and involvement - as long as some progress is shown.

Communication is also about attracting the attention of 'may be' users. Supermarket-style flyers can stimulate business by telling people of events they can get to by bus as well as telling new potential users what is on offer.

At Solent Blue Line we offered a well-used website and it always surprised me how many enquiries were simply asking if a bus service was available, often on a corridor with a busy route. Ideally, door-to-door publicity should be at least three to four times a year. People move house, change jobs, and start new college courses all the time. We shouldn't wait for them to look for us. Communications must be two-way with comment cards, Internet and Freepost even if we let Traveline handle our calls.

All this can still miss a vital audience who may not need our services but can influence their destiny - opinion formers and politicians who want to know what we are doing with 'their' bus service. Consultation with local authorities helps build good relationships. Politicians don't like surprises. 'Below-the-line' public relations involves stories which reach the editorial section of local and trade media, which have a further reach than paid advertising - and the right story can create a feel-good factor for staff as well as a rosy glow for politicians.

This is an exciting time for the bus industry. Much hard work by many has given us a range of tools to achieve success. The opportunity really is ours.

Have *your* say

Send your letters to: The Editor, *CBW*, Emap Active, Bretton Court, Bretton, Peterborough PE3 8DZ or e-mail *mark.williams@emap.com*

Answer is to get your act together

From: David Morgan
Cardiff

AS A regular bus user in South Wales, I was interested to read 2 Travel chief executive Bev Fowles' statement (*CBW*, July 22), alleging that predatory tactics employed by the local incumbent operator in Cardiff are the source of all his ills and somehow seem to have resulted in the failure of his registered services to have operated in Swansea, Cwmbran and, incidentally, Newport. At the same time, he scotches "rumours that it has substantially failed to provide services in the city, in Cwmbran and in Swansea."

Where are your buses then, Mr Fowles? The Welsh Traffic Area Office seems to think you are operating but, from what I see on my travels not a wheel has turned in Swansea, Newport and Cwmbran on routes that were registered to commence on June 1. Traveline in Wales is in a state of confusion as to what your company should be operating, as is the local National Federation of Bus Users.

So please, get your act together and channel your energies into providing an actual alternative to Cardiff Bus, First Cymru, Newport Transport and Stagecoach, rather than running to regulatory authorities.

Was message too late?

From: Andrew Richmond
Epsom Coaches, Epsom, Surrey

I HAVE read your article about combating bus vandalism entitled 'The trouble with kids' (*CBW*, July 8). Unfortunately Translink's message, "Vandalise our bus and we'll catch you", seems to have been received too late to save the nearside wipers on the mobile classroom (above).

● One cannot, of course, tell whether the lack of the wiper is due to vandalism, the quality of Neoplan engineering when the bus was built, or a problem with parts supply - *Ed.*

Irish fuel duty rebates

From: Chris Lonergan
Manager, Customs & Excise Solutions, PWC

IF YOU are a coach company operating vehicles on tours in the Republic of Ireland you may not be aware that it is now possible to obtain a rebate of Irish excise duty on fuel purchased in Ireland while on tour.

This, of course, is different to the UK where, under the Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG) scheme, such claims are not allowable under current rules. The Irish scheme may affect your choice as to where to buy fuel during a tour of Ireland.

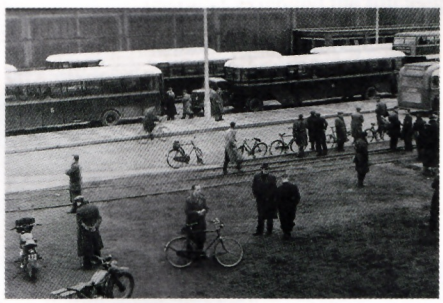
Pricewaterhouse Coopers' Customs & Excise Solutions team based in Manchester works closely with its counterparts in Dublin, Ireland, and together we can offer a service to coach operators who like to take advantage of this scheme but would prefer to leave the preparation and submission of the claims to a third party.

If you would like to know more about the scheme contact Chris Lonergan, PricewaterhouseCoopers, 101 Barbirolli Square, Lower Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3PW, tel 0161 245 2637 or 0776498 8741.

Nothing new under the sun

From: Roger Pownall
Commercial director, Cogent Passenger Seating Ltd, Swansea

I THOUGHT you might be interested in a tongue-in-cheek way in the enclosed extract from a booklet published in April 1952 by John Summers and Sons Ltd regarding their steel works at Shotton in North Wales where my grandfather was responsible for all shipping and transport. Clearly the concepts of integrated transport and of massive articulated 'people carriers' have been around for longer than we realise.



HOW TO CONTACT *CBW*

Coach and Bus Week
is published by Emap Active,
Bretton Court, Bretton,
Peterborough, PE3 8DZ
Switchboard: 0870 062 0993
Fax: 01733 467770 (editorial & advertising)
0870 062 6764 (production)
Web: *www.cbwnet.co.uk*

EDITORIAL
***Editor* Mark Williams**
0870 062 3130, mobile 07720 769869
mark.williams@emap.com
***Deputy Editor* Frank Forster**
0870 062 4061, mobile 07702 640367
frank.forster@emap.com
***Reporter* Andy Roden**
0870 062 1163
andrew.roden@emap.com
Technical and Minibus Editor
Martin Cole
0870 062 5065, mobile 07885 692144
martin.cole@emap.com
***Office Manager* Jacqui Grobler**
0870 062 5066
jacqui.grobler@emap.com

CONTRIBUTORS
Mark Barton – *tourism* 01225 489024

ADVERTISING
Classified Advertising Manager
Mel Sharples 0870 062 5068
mel.sharples@emap.com
Senior Sales Executive
Vicky Senkey 0870 062 5069
vicky.senkey@emap.com
Display Sales Executive
Julie Cousins 0870 062 5067
julie.cousins@emap.com
Tourism Sales Executive
Helen Savage 0870 062 6760
helen.savage@emap.com
Senior Classified Sales Executive
Lucy Anne Nelson 0870 062 6762
lucyanne.nelson@emap.com

PRODUCTION
Production Controller (display and classified)
Carrie Randall 0870 062 6764
Editorial Production
Sandy Davis
***Designers* Matthew Hunt, Caroline Barley**

EMAP ACTIVE
Managing Director
Ian Templeton
Publisher
Vicki Culverhouse
Finance Executive
Ruth Marston-Smith
General Manager Transport Division
Nigel Harris

EMAP PLC
Group Chief Executive
Tom Moloney
Group Finance Director
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The sky's the limit

After forming a relationship with Spanish coachbuilder UNVI, Eire minibus converter KVC jointly worked on the development of the Esker midicoach. Earlier this year, two new UNVI models were introduced - and Martin Cole has driven them in Ireland

TWELVE MONTHS after the creation of Esker Bus & Coach and the generation of considerable new business - the company is planning to expand yet again.

Managing director Danny McGee formed KVC Manufacturing, the vehicle conversion specialist, in April 1997, in Kilbeggan, County Westmeath, Republic of Ireland, which quickly established itself as an innovator and gained a reputation for good quality.

KVC's output is considerable and diverse as it covers a broad range of vehicle makes, models and types. It builds large numbers of crew-cab vehicles in addition to accessible minibuses, basic minibuses and executive specification vehicles including extended Sprinters. Over 350 minibuses were completed last year but there were around 1,200 conversions in total.

After striking up a relationship with Spanish coachbuilder UNVI, KVC jointly worked on the development of the Esker - a stylish midicoach based on the Mercedes-Benz Atego 1223L chassis. This offered up to 37 seats, plus a courier, in just under ten metres and, despite the drawbacks of a front engine, the care taken over the design of the entrance ensured passenger access was quite acceptable and maximised the potential of the saloon.

Sales of the Esker in Ireland have been very encouraging and, to broaden the range available, Esker Bus & Coach Sales was established as a separate entity to handle sales directly. A new facility has been built to administer the import operation and it also commissions and sells KVC conversions.

KVC still acts independently and builds for individual customers - as it always has done. The workforce has grown to 50, with 40 employed in KVC and the remainder in Esker Bus & Coach. Esker Bus & Coach Sales is free to sell a range of vehicles and has recently taken and sold a batch of Plaxton Cheetahs. The company is in negotiations with other suppliers.

Earlier this year, two new UNVI models were introduced to the range just in time for the UK Coach Rally at Brighton. They included a smaller version of the Esker on the Mercedes-Benz 10.18L. Called Cimo, it measures 9.2m, has a smaller 177bhp engine and can seat up to 33 passengers plus a courier. Priced at £95,000 with a very attractive specification it has many advantages over the larger minibuses - notably extensive underfloor luggage capacity and a large boot.

The other newcomer, the Riada, was UNVI's stylish body option for the new Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 616. Riada seats up to 22 passengers plus a courier and offers very generous legroom.

The original Esker has now been renamed the Esker 'Touring' to avoid confusion as the range is expanded - and it is set to expand further with the addition of two more models.

The first of these is a heavier version of the Touring model on a 15-tonne Atego 1523 chassis. Available from February or March 2005, it has the same 230bhp engine but will have the capacity to carry 41 passengers and still retain air conditioning and double glazing. The new model also comes with 'Telligent' braking, a cruise control and a driver's airbag.

The other addition will be to take the Riada body and graft it on to an 814D Vario, where the indications are that it will carry up to 29 seated passengers. Riada is also being lined up as a body option for lowfloor Sprinter 616s when the chassis are more readily available.

Expanding the range has already generated possibilities of yet more development for both KVC and Esker Bus & Coach Sales. Although the paint is hardly dry on the new premises in Kilbeggan, an opportunity has arisen to acquire a massive facility on the outskirts of the town. The site covers about 12.5 acres and has 98,000 square feet of factory and administration space.

Danny McGee sees this as amazing potential and, if the company is successful in securing the site, he believes it will offer tremen-

Danny McGee, MD Esker Bus & Coach and KVC Manufacturing

Line up: Esker Bus & Coach Sales with its new product line-up – Touring, Cimo and Riada

KVC's extended Sprinter - 19 seats plus courier

Riada's comfortable interior

dous benefits in allowing the use of forecourt frontage and a showroom. It will house both existing operations and the additional space will mean KVC can convert its bay-building techniques into line-building production and this sets the company up nicely for introducing coach-built bodies to the range. Nothing is yet etched in stone over the acquisition of the new site but, if it comes to fruition, there may well be an announcement around the time of the Dublin Coach show.

New developments from KVC include an in-swinging door for Mercedes-Benz Varios. The unit is light, made entirely from GRP, and matches the body contours perfectly. The other is a redesigned step well on the Sprinter that has a flat top step - not the usual, angled, fabrication that slopes downwards in the saloon.

Riada

The new Riada body made a considerable impact on visitors to the UK Coach Rally in April despite a few rough edges that were the result of rushing it through to be ready for the event.

Most impressive at first sight was the blemish-free panelwork which, combined with the sleek styling and direct bonded tinted double glazing, presented an impression of quality. The powered entrance door opened to reveal shallow steps and well positioned handrails for easy access. The body with of 2.42m allowed for a spacious, sunken, carpeted gangway, making it easy to move down the saloon. The demonstration vehicle was equipped with 20 Fainsa Gala seats - trimmed in black leather. Legroom was very generous and seat spacing sensibly worked out so the window pillars made very little intrusion into passenger's line of vision. Air Bus air conditioning had been fitted and a drop-down LCD screen built into the headlining at the front of the saloon.

Luggage racks extended the full length of the ➤

The Riada brings new capacity options to minicoach operators

seating area and they contained individual passenger sets and integral strip lighting. A roof hatch was built into the roof of the saloon and extensive use made of wine-red brushed PVC trim on the roof, racks and sidewalls. Flooring was a mottled blue/grey non-slip material.

The ride in the saloon was very comfortable from any of the floor-mounted seats. The rear row was not so relaxing as the mountings tended to cant the whole seat forwards. In a different Riada equipped with moquette trim the effect was not quite so bad - possibly due to the shape of the seat cushion, but Esker Bus & Coach was aware of the problem and it will be addressed very quickly - as soon as re-angled mountings can be manufactured.

On the road, the Riada delivered a comfortable ride and there were no rattles from the body or fittings despite testing over some very bumpy road surfaces. Parabolic suspension was fitted front and rear and it coped pretty well, only bottoming on the most severe of bumps. Engine noise was most prevalent in the first couple of seat rows but all positions further back were well shielded and it would have been easy to maintain a conversation with fellow passengers.

High luggage capacity makes Riada very versatile

Left: A flat top step for the Sprinter is unusual construction

Performance from the 160bhp 616 CDI engine was very pleasing. It pulled hard and proved to be a delight when cruising. In top gear (fifth) it could drop down to 30mph and pull away again without a trace of shudder or any sign of protest. A full load of passengers and luggage could affect this but it highlighted the tremendous torque available that helps make touring so simple and stress-free.

The driving position was comfortable, with plenty of scope for adjustment and all additional switches neatly mounted in a panel to the right of the driver. Sensibly sized mirrors gave a good view of the Riada's sides and the road behind.

Unlike the lowfloor 616 Sprinter, which feels almost like a large go-kart to drive, the Riada carries its weight higher up and this can be felt. It is no detriment to the vehicle's performance but a distinctly different feel. The body frame complies with EC R66 Rollover requirements and is fully treated with anti-corrosion coatings.

Brakes were powerful but required positive pressure on the pedal. Discs are standard all-round.

Priced at around £72,000, Riada has every chance of attracting operators wanting a coachbuilt minicoach with reasonable capacity and such a large boot for passengers on tour or on feeder work. The capacity also means smaller executive-style parties could be accommodated along with tables and plenty of on-board facilities.

Cimo

Marginally smaller than the Esker Touring at 9,215mm long, the new Cimo combines high luggage capacity with sleek coach styling and passenger capacity of 33 plus a courier.

Standard equipment includes Air Bus air conditioning and Esteban Ergos CLT reclining seats with lap belts. Like its larger brother it has a driver's door to facilitate entry to the driving position, a front-mounted monitor with DVD/radio/PA system and ten-disc changer. Esker Bus & Coach says it favours fitting the monitor and DVD as standard because of the work involved in fitting one as

Below: Cimo is a cost-effective package with more advantages than disadvantages

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Esker Touring

Built on a Mercedes-Benz 1223 chassis, with 37 to 41 reclining seats, air con, full air suspension, double glazing, TV + DVD and 6.2m³ of luggage capacity

Esker Riada

Built on a Mercedes-Benz 616 Sprinter chassis, with 23 + guide seats, air con, double glazing, TV + DVD and 3.8m³ of luggage capacity.

Esker Cimo

Built on a Mercedes-Benz 1018 chassis with 33 + guide reclining seats, air con, rear air suspension, double glazing, TV + DVD and 6m³ of luggage capacity.

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Web: www.eskerbusandcoach.com
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an upgrade. Mr McGee believes most customers are happy with this as the overall cost is much cheaper if supplied as OE.

The front entrance door provides easy access to a spacious saloon via four shallow steps and the full-length luggage racks have sufficient depth to be of practical storage use. Continuous strip lighting is positioned alongside the racks and each seat has individual passenger sets integral to the overhead racking.

Extensive use is made, once more, of brushed PVC interior trim and the forward roof moulding incorporates lockable storage for the driver or for passengers' personal effects.

Noise suppression on the 1018L is not so effective as on the 1223L but it was not excessive and has little effect on seating two or three rows back. Mid-saloon presented the quietest area of all as the rear section seemed prone to picking up road noise and/or some booming. As the coach was driven unladen this observation may be invalid when passengers and their luggage are taken aboard. The only other intrusive sound came from the intermittent operation of the compressor.

Left: In-swinging door for a Vario is an innovative option

Initial operation of the Cimo, according to Esker Bus & Coach, shows the vehicle is returning a creditable 22mpg and its performance is not far below that of the 230bhp Esker Touring - which is also said to return an average 18mpg.

Once in the seat, the driver has a comfortable environment with only the minor failings of front-engine noise and a not-quite-perfect gear lever position to criticise. Vision is very good and only marred by an obscured patch to the left when making a right turn at an angled junction. The problem is virtually eliminated if the courier seat is empty.

Overall feeling suggests the Cimo is more taut than the Touring. It has the same parabolic front springing and rear air suspension but it feels far more sensitive. It handles and steers equally well, delivering a lot of feedback through the steering. One of the features of the engine is its exhaust brake. This serves quite well when engaged but is far more effective if introduced when the engine is spinning fast. Changing down the gears early has a very positive influence on its effectiveness.

Gearchanging seemed a little lighter and easier than on the larger model, too, yet the engine is very flexible and so there is not too much demand on the driver when under way.

Two coaches have been supplied with an EPS automated transmission and this is regarded as a major step forward but there have been some glitches with the programmed change sequence. As a result, Esker Bus & Coach is not supplying any more until the problem has been addressed. New software has been made available and will be programmed into the gearboxes when the operators stop working long enough for the job to be done.

Cimo driver's entrance makes life easier

Esker Bus & Coach has pulled out of this year's Coach & Bus exhibition but will be taking a prime position at the Dublin Coach Show in mid-November. Early deliveries of Esker Touring models to UK customers have reportedly met with a very favourable response and sales in Ireland have become well-established. The UK distribution is handled by Harry Ferguson Sales of East Whitburn on the outskirts of Edinburgh. CBW

Below: Cimo's interior is warm and spacious with excellent views for passengers

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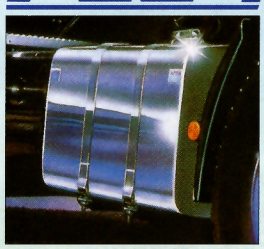

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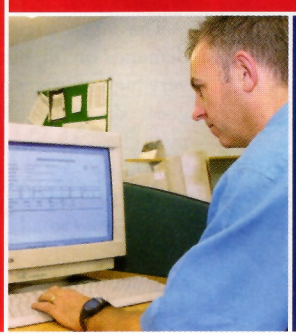

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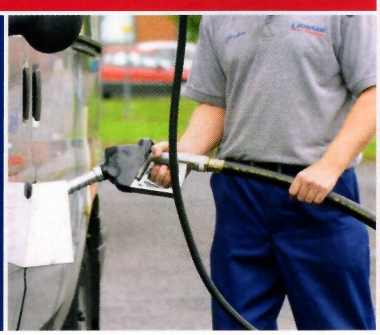
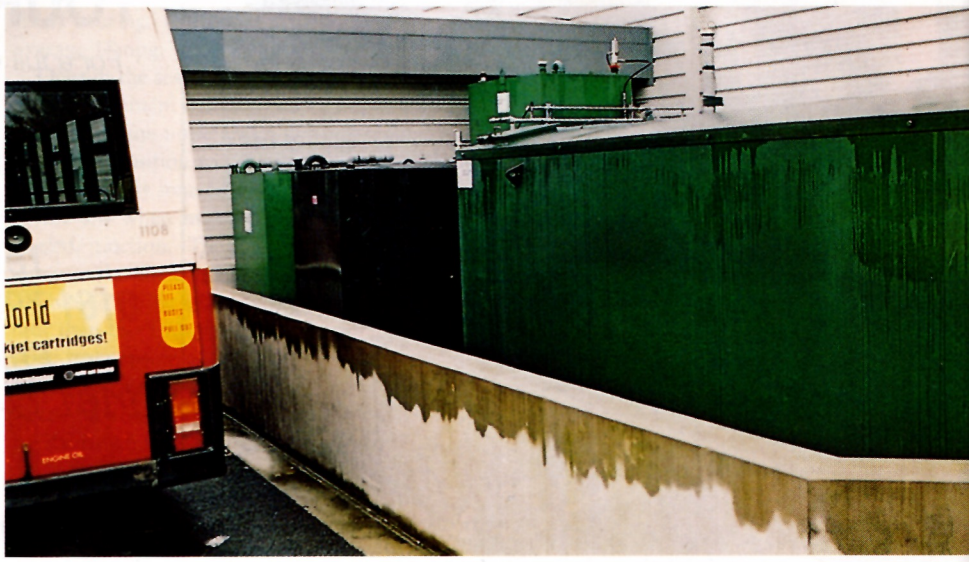


runs like

Manage your oil and

Expenditure on fuel and lubricants is one of the highest overheads facing all operators. We look at ways you can get the best from your bills



THE management of your fuel and lubes begins the moment the truck delivers them.

Tanks should be checked periodically to ensure there are no leaks and the delivery system to the vehicle needs to be of a kind that prevents spillage through overfilling. Security of the stock is also an issue and even the simplest of management systems can dramatically cut incidences of theft.

These days it is a requirement for fuel stocks to be bunded - which means surrounded by an impermeable catchment area that can accommodate 120% of the tank's actual capacity. The aim of this is to prevent spillage and pollution of drains and waterways - for which there are heavy penalties in the way of fines.

Stock checks should also include a check on any build up of water and sediment in the bottom of the tank. If this is ignored it can lead to a growth of bacteria that forms a sludge which quickly starts to block filters and cause fuel starvation.

Mpg control

Individual drivers play as big a part as vehicles in fuel consumption figures - so it pays to monitor both.

Performance programmes can help identify 'rogue' drivers and vehicles - allowing measures to be taken to resolve the problem. Drivers identified as having a heavy right foot could be offered driver retraining, while poor-performing vehicles need inspection to identify what is wasting diesel.

Many operators using comprehensive management systems have discovered their vehicles spend a high percentage of their time with the engine idling - sometimes up to 20% - which means there is a strong case for drivers turning the engine off whenever stationary for long periods - cutting fuel use and saving costs.

Fuel management systems come in many forms and there are suitable applications for the smallest to the largest of fleets. The simplest are those attached to the very basic electric pumps designed to aid fast filling. They prevent any fuel delivery unless an authorised code is entered and they record the exact amount of fuel dispensed and other relevant details. Usually these systems can be upgraded to give more comprehensive data and to connect remotely with the management office to transfer all the data.

These systems are ideal not just for small operators but for those with temporary satellite depots, particularly where mobile storage tanks are employed.

Similar information can be retrieved from dedicated fuel pumps controlled by more sophisticated management systems. These are ideally suited to larger fleets, especially those with multiple sites, and they incorporate extensive reporting facilities.

Oiling the cogs

Lubrication has moved on significantly in the last few years, particularly with the advent of synthetic oils.

The latest engine technology places high demands on oil, but drain periods are now at very high mileages and in combination with a good oil-sampling and analysis service, a complete check on oil condition can be maintained at all times.

Comprehensive analysis is now so detailed it can detect small traces of metal from differ-

Left: Systems need to be in place to protect from delivery spills

Derv

Storage behind bunds is essential under current guidelines

ent wearing surfaces in an engine. This can indicate wear on pistons, valve guides or imminent bearing failure and gives advance warning of the need to take preventative measures.

Traces of carbon and/or unburnt fuel can also highlight worn piston rings, cylinder bores or poorly functioning injectors. Sampling ensures operators can get the most out of their oils in terms of long life and potential breakdowns and subsequent disruption to services can also be minimised.

Major fuel and lubricant suppliers have recently begun introducing packages guaranteeing substantial savings if operators use their particular fuel in conjunction with branded oils and lubricants. Typical claims are for a 5-6% reduction in fuel consumption and savings on total oil expenditure because of the longer service intervals.

Improved fuel consumption stems basically from the lower viscosity of the oil (eg 0W-30 or 5W-40) which reduces frictional losses in the engine - improving power and performance. Low viscosity transmission oils have a similar effect - reducing power losses and aiding the vehicle to perform more efficiently.

Don't forget that disposal of lubricants and other workshop waste has become a big issue over the recent past, and specialist contractors offering 'managed' waste disposal could be expensive. Some fuel and lubricant suppliers, like BP, offer it as a part of the overall package, and this may offset the higher cost of buying their premium products.

Don't expect gains in mileage, says Shell

SHELL has warned operators that new lubricants for Euro 3 and 4 are unlikely to offer extended drain periods.

The fuel and oil giant's sales and marketing manager Ashley Proctor says the extra performance demands placed on engine lubricants mean the huge gains in longer drain period offered over the last few years will probably end.

"When you look what's happening to the engine oil, it's getting double the loading placed on it with high injection pressures," he said. "That means more fuel getting into the oil, and the changes in engine timing have a soot production knock-on effect."

Mr Proctor explained that engine oil is now being asked to absorb greater quantities of soot than before - at Euro 2 emissions levels, 35 litres of oil has to hold on to 3.5 lb of soot, whereas the same amount of Euro 3 engine oil is being asked to contain 6.2 lb.

"Oil can only carry so much soot before it starts to thicken, and then it no longer does its job with the result that you face turbocharger bearing failures, for example," he said.

Mr Proctor said I is now vital that operators get inexpensive oil diagnostics done so they can determine fleet policy for lubricants. He said that doesn't necessarily mean buying more expensive oils - in mixed E2 and E3 fleets, you have the choice of stocking an oil for each standard of engine, or a single E2-compatible oil which, when used in E3 engines, is drained twice as frequently.

"Most oil suppliers and some independent labs offer diagnostics on used engine oil, which will help operators decide on oil-change policy. It need only be done once a year, and costs £10 to £15 per test. Shell can offer a complimentary service," he said.

Shell's Premium Rimula Super is now to AP1/CI4 specification suitable for E3 and E4 engines: "It's a bit dearer, but you are paying for Shell's research, which involves engine suppliers," he says.

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Fleet *upgrades*

Longer coaches for long haul suit Ferris

Volvo Coach Sales

FERRIS Holidays' two extra-long Volvo B12B Berkhof deckers are proving perfect for the company's long-haul breaks.

The Cardiff company bought the 83-seat, 14.75-metre vehicles to serve its Spanish holiday season. The trek down to the Mediterranean demands a combination of comfort and economy and, in these two areas, MD Jason Ferris says the Volvos are exceptional.

"We get nine or ten mpg, which is only a couple of miles behind single-decks with almost half the seating," he told CBW. "We are now beginning to think there's a case to answer for going all double-deck."

The vehicles have 420bhp engines and I-Shift automatic gearboxes. They have air conditioning, toilet, TV/DVD and drinks facilities. The drivers have, in particular, taken to the I-Shift gearboxes, says Mr Ferris.

In particular, deckers offer space for another of Ferris Holidays' ideas - smoking 'rooms' in the lower saloon to cater for their customer base: "It's just an idea at the moment but to stay ahead with our tours we constantly have to look at ways we can add more to the deal."

With ski boxes attached, the coaches are 14.8m but, with the seating for 83, Mr Ferris had some doubts over luggage capacity: "Actually the vehicles have fantastic luggage space.

"One thing we hadn't taken into account was the extra time taken to set down 12 more passengers. On the Liverpool run, we are running one vehicle instead of two, but the run is taking longer," said Mr Ferris.

He says he is also considering de-seating the Berkhofs to 71 seats - in legroom terms, his 'Royale Class' throughout - as another added-value project.

Eleven Aleros ordered by UK operators

Optare

OPTARE has scored a success for its Alero range with a number of recent deliveries.

In Heywood, Lancashire, Heywood New Heart Transport has taken three Aleros to provide vital community links around housing estates to the nearby hospital and industrial estates. A demand-responsive service, it is being operated as a supplement to dial-a-ride and patient transport services which already exist.

The service is run by members of the local community and has initial funding for 18 months. To use the service, individuals pay a £1 membership fee and call to discover which regular runs are scheduled for the next day. The vehicles can seat 16 and are powered by 122bhp Iveco diesels.

In Darlington, meanwhile, local operator Darlington & District Services Company is running four Aleros on a pair of routes serving the south of the town. They are mainly confined to two six-days-per-week routes from the Morton Park retail complex to the Eastbourne Sports Centre and Firthmoor. Two housing estates are served by services that operate along narrow and congested roads, providing new links to employment, shopping and leisure facilities. The operation complements, rather than competes with existing operators in Darlington.

Completing Optare's Alero success is the inauguration of services with four vehicles in the Surrey Borough of Waverley. Former Formula 1 driver Damon Hill launched a new service designed for people with transport difficulties, along with a new call centre and headquarters near Guildford. The service was funded by a grant of £125,000 from the Countryside Agency and 100 people have been trained as volunteer drivers.

More than 1,400 people are registered users and the first full year of service saw 36,000 journeys made, with fare income of £80,0000. Though the vehicles were delivered two years ago, it is only now that Waverley Hoppa Community Transport has revealed figures for the service.

Four Aleros are running for Green Bus in Darlington

Six Solos serve 'Skeggie'

Optare

LINCOLNSHIRE Road Car is using six Optare Solos on its high-frequency shuttle service from Skegness to Ingoldmells.

Branded as 'Superbuzz' and painted in Road Car's yellow lowfloor livery, the Solos combine with two other routes to offer a five-minute service out of Skegness.

The latest deal follows the purchase of ten Solos last year, most of which were later transferred to Scunthorpe. It means Skegness now operates all Road Car's Cummins-engined Solos.

More Merits for Mold

Wrightbus

WREXHAM operator GHA Coaches has taken two more Volvo Merits, to be used on Flintshire County Council's Mold-Chester Route.

GHA claims the vehicles are better specified than two it received in May and are fitted with CCTV, digital information displays and radio/cassette/CD players for what it calls "added driver comfort."

The new Merits have a Wrightbus Classic body and are powered by a 150bhp Cummins ISB engine. They seat 39, with 28 standing.

In a statement, GHA MD Gareth Davies said: "Not only are we very happy with the performance of those we already have, but the backup we get from Volvo in the event of a problem is excellent."

Club saved up for 13 years

LDV

SHEPWAY Disabled Sports and Social Club is welcoming the arrival of an LDV Convoy worth £25,000 after saving 13 years for the vehicle.

The organisation has over 40 members and will use the Convoy to ferry club members to a variety of sports and leisure activities and weekend outings.

The club's treasurer, Bob Burgess, is pleased with the vehicle and the service received from LDV: "We chose LDV over a few other manufacturers for its value for money and it also provides excellent accessibility for our members."

It was supplied by LDV main dealer Channel Commercials, which is based in Ashford, Kent.

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What's new

Trent and Barton uniform image

RAINBOW Corporatewear, the Derbyshire clothing specialist with bases in Derby, Skelton and East Cleveland, has developed a new uniform for Trent Barton.

The new look is aimed at unifying the Trent Buses and Barton Buses images.

Over 800 staff start wearing the collection of items, designed exclusively for the operator, from August. Rainbow's account manager, Simon Allen, said: "The range we have developed is predominantly structured wear with formal shirts. However, Trent Barton selected a three-in-one coat with a detachable fleece that has proved very popular due to its functional, innovative, modern design.

Contact 01287 656000.

Graffiti Gone beats etchers

CHICAGO GLASS, a Kent-based company, has developed a process called Graffiti Gone for restoring glass etched with graffiti.

The product incorporates a protection from future damage and the process is currently being patented throughout Europe and the USA.

Chicago Glass has, for 15 years, specialised in glass restoration and employed a national team of mobile technicians.

Deeply-etched glass, hit by what is termed 'Dutch' graffiti, is created by vandals using glasscutters, drill bits or spark plugs to create deep scores in the surface of the glass. To date, the only solution has been to polish out the etching, which can cause serious distortion, or to replace the glass - both operations proving costly.

Graffiti Gone is said to be a fraction of the cost. It involves treating the glass surface to return a clear finish followed by the application of an easily replaceable sacrificial film.

Several major bus and train companies are already using Graffiti Gone and London Underground has begun using it on trains and in stations.

***Details from* www.scratchremovers.co.uk**

RoadBASE roll-out wins

CHEVIN FLEET Solutions has gained a number of high-profile customers for its RoadBASE Windows-based fleet management software.

New customers include Volvo Financial Services, Hardys & Hansons, Lincolnshire Ambulance Service, Halton Borough Council, Durmfries & Galloway Constabulary, Eaton-Williams, Colchester Borough Council, Grant Welsh Commercials, Solar Self-Drive and Scarborough Borough Council - each with a variety of requirements.

Chevin claims RoadBASE is both flexible and user friendly and ideally suited for small to medium-sized fleets. Larger operators are catered for with an upgraded package called FleetWave.

Details from* www.chevincomputers.com *or telephone Tamara Keeling on 01773 821992.

Light-reactive welding helmet added to Thorite's safety wear range

THORITE has added a light-reactive welding helmet to its 'Diamond' range of products.

The company says it is attractively priced at £79.95 plus VAT yet offers the same features as more expensive options. It is designed to guard against visible light, infra-red and ultra violet radiation. The helmet has an auto-darkening wide-view lens that can change from light to dark in just 1/25,000th of a second - ensuring continuous eye protection. The process is controlled by two independent photo sensors that react almost instantaneously as the welding arc is struck.

The helmet weighs just 430g and is constructed from high-impact polyamide nylon. It has a clear spatter shield to cover the optics and a self-charging 3v lithium solar cell battery is included. It has a life expectancy of around six years.

Current European standards are all met - including BS EN 379:1994 and BS EN 175:1997 ANSI Z87.1:1989.

The Diamond light-reactive helmet can be acquired by same-day dispatch from Thorite's national distribution centre on Freephone 0800 0345850.

***For more details call Ross Gowler on 01274 663471 or website* www.thorite.co.uk**

DeltaGard onsite analyser

For more information on DeltaGard and other services on offer at Robertson Oil Analysis Laboratory, contact Gwyn Simmonds on 01492 574757 or alternatively e-mail your questions to wearcheck@robresint.co.uk

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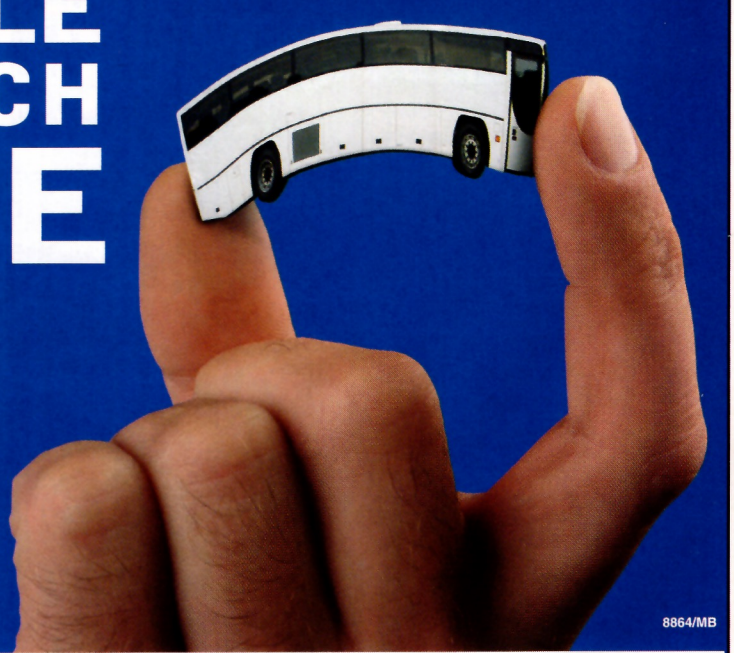

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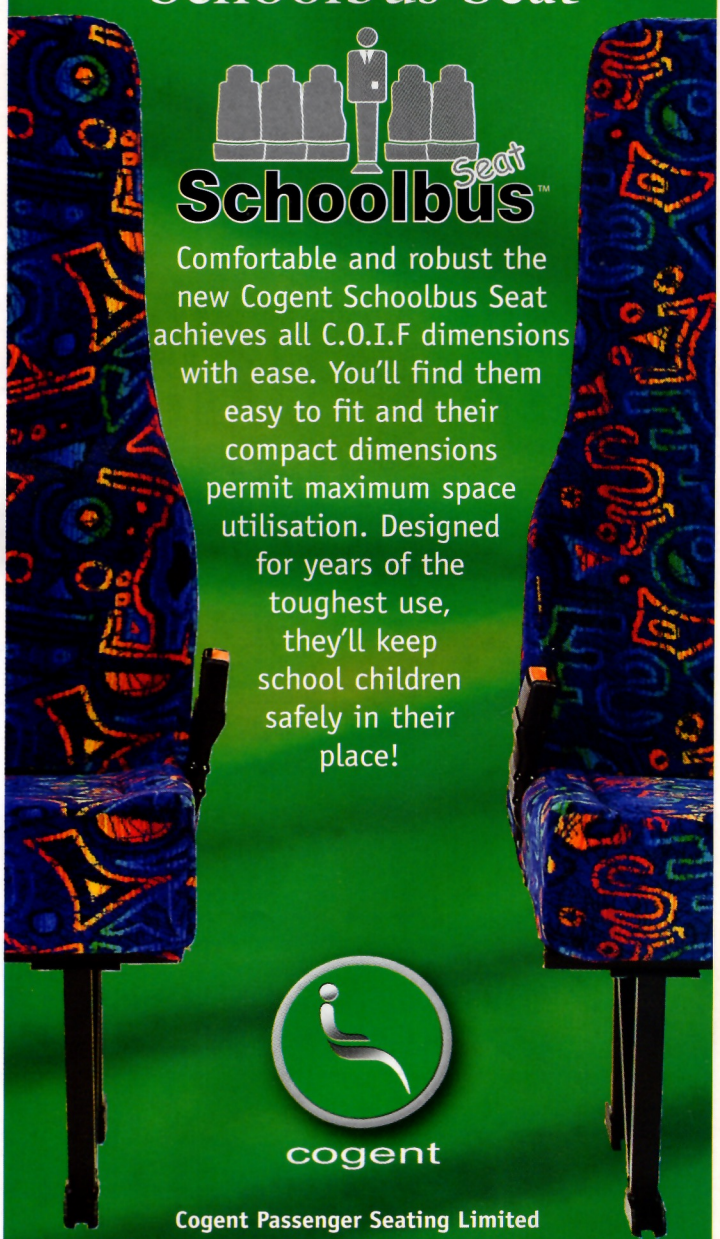

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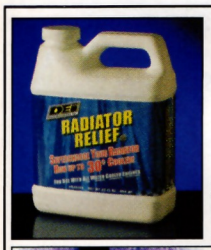

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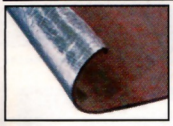

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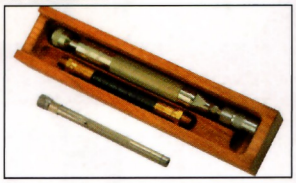

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In the first instance please send a current C.V. to:

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9220/TEN

Birmingham City Council

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Mrs M. Samrai
Corporate Procurement Services
1 Lancaster Circus
PO Box 10680
Birmingham
B4 7WB

or by e-mail to procurement_info@birmingham.gov.uk or by fax on 0121 303 7322

by **12 noon Monday 16th August 2004** quoting reference **PROC / 0106** and stating whether you wish to receive a hardcopy or an electronic copy of the tender documents.

Your tender should be returned by **12 noon Friday 3rd September 2004**

For more information contact Alan Jarvis tel. 0121 303 0028 or email Alan_ j _ jarvis@birmingham.gov.uk

9203/TEN

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Whats On...

September 9-12: Commercial Vehicle & Bus, Crocus City Expo Center, Moscow. *001 203 357 1400*

September 11-12: UK Bus Driver of the Year, Blackpool Seafront and Hilton Hotel. *0161 427 5986*

September 12: Thamesdown Transport (formerly Swindon Corporation) Centenary Bus Rally, Wroughton Science Museum. *01489 860110*

September 22: Thamesdown Transport Centenary. *01489 860110*

November 2-4: Coach&Bus 2004 show, NEC Birmingham. *020 7240 5800*

November 9-12: CTA Show, G-Mex. *0870 774 3586*

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Twin monitors, Rev / Camera,
MOT June 05

2000 'W'
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1 owner, Low Mileage, A/C,
Comfort Shift, Choice of 2,
NEW MOT

2000 'W'
Bova Futura FHD 51str Exec,
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Twin monitors, Rev/Camera,
MOT May 2005

1993 'K'
Toyota Optimo II,
21 Belted Recliners,
Power door, radio casette,
MOT April 2005

1997 'P'
Volvo B10M Plaxton Premiere 3500,
53 seats,
MOT Jan 05

1996 'P'
Dennis Javelin 240,
UVG Unistar, Manual, 57str,
3pt all age s/belts, low mileage,
New MOT

1999 'V'
Caetano Optimo IV,
24 Recliners, Tinted Windows,
1 Owner, Good Condition,
MOT Dec 2004

1999 'T'
Dennis Dart SLF Caetano,
Compass,10.6Mtr, 31str +19
Stand, W/C Space, Choice,
New MOT

1998 'S'
Volvo B10M Caetano Enigma,
49 Recliners, Courier seat, Toilet,
Conti door, TV/Video,
MOT Sept 2004

Vehicles just in...

1997 'P' Dennis Dart 10.0m SLF Midibus
1998 'PP' DAF Plaxton Paramount 4000 73 seats
1994 'M' Iveco 59.12 Marshall 29 seats
2001 'Y' LDV Convoy High Roof 17 seats
2000 'W' Ford Transit LWB 14 seats
2002 'PP' Setra S315 Gt HD Exec seats
1998 'S' B10M Caetano Enigma 49 seats
1997 'P' B10M Plaxton Premiere 49 seats
1998 'S' East Lancs Olympian 72 or 76 seats
1989 'PP' DAF LAG Panoramic 49 seats
1994 'PP' Mercedes 709D Plaxton Beaver 27+8
1995 'M' Mercedes 609D Devon 16 seats
1996 'N' Mercedes 711D Wessex 33+13
1995 'N' Toyota Optimo 3 21 seats
1996 'P' Bova Futura 49 Exec seats
1998 'R' Mercedes 814D Citistar 33+13
1998 'R' Mercedes 612D 16 seats
1999 'V' Iveco Ford 49-10 Mellor 16 seats

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